



America's Prophet

By Bruce Feiler
ISBN: 9780061939259

Introduction

The Exodus story is America's Story.

Moses is our real founding father.

The pilgrims quoted his story. Franklin and Jefferson proposed he appear on the U.S. seal. Washington and Lincoln were called his incarnations. The Statue of Liberty and Superman were molded in his image. Martin Luther King, Jr., invoked him the night before he died. Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama cited him as inspiration. For four hundred years, one figure inspired more Americans than any other. His name is Moses.

In this groundbreaking book, *New York Times* bestselling author Bruce Feiler travels through touchstones in American history and traces the biblical prophet's influence from the Mayflower through today. He visits the island where the pilgrims spent their first Sabbath, climbs the bell tower where the Liberty Bell was inscribed with a quote from Moses, retraces the Underground Railroad where "Go Down, Moses" was the national anthem of slaves, and dons the robe Charlton Heston wore in *The Ten Commandments*.

"Even a cursory review of American history indicates that Moses has emboldened leaders of all stripes," Feiler writes, "patriot and loyalist, slave and master, Jew and Christian. Could the persistence of his story serve as a reminder of our shared national values? Could he serve as a unifying force in a disunifying time? If Moses could split the Red Sea, could he unsplit America?"

One part adventure story, one part literary detective story, one part exploration of faith in contemporary life, *America's Prophet* takes readers through the landmarks of America's narrative—from Gettysburg to Selma, the Silver Screen to the Oval Office—to understand how Moses has shaped the nation's character.

Meticulously researched and highly readable, *America's Prophet* is a thrilling, original work of history that will forever change how we view America, our faith, and our future.

Questions for Discussion

1. After having read the book, do you agree with Bruce Feiler that Moses is America's true founding father?
2. What does the phrase "the Promised Land" mean? Would you call America the Promised Land? Why? What makes it so? If you could create your own ideal promised land, what would it look like?
3. *America's Prophet* takes us from the Pilgrims to the Revolution, the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement. Where were you surprised to discover Moses' influence on some of the most decisive events in our nation's history? What amazed you most?
4. Do you have a favorite Exodus Story from our history? Explain. When Bruce Feiler met President Bush, he asked him if there were any moments when Moses inspired him. Have there been any moments when Moses inspired you?
5. Can you think of some other examples—not just limited to America—of where Moses and the Exodus story has been an influence, whether historically or in popular culture?
6. Often when we hear religion and politics being discussed it is in a negative light. How can politics and religion be a positive force for each other? How does Feiler make this argument? Use examples from the book. Can you think of other examples to support your point?
7. At the end of *America's Prophet*, the author asks if Moses is still relevant today. What do you think? Do you agree with his conclusions? How might the Exodus story help us even now?
8. Take any example from the book. Describe how Moses inspired George Washington and Benjamin Franklin or Abraham Lincoln or Barack Obama.
9. Think about the Emma Lazarus poem, *The New Colossus*. When you read her words, what do they mean to you? What do you think they might mean to today's immigrants? Is their "promised land" different from the promised land of those who came before?
10. Who in your life or your community would you liken to Moses? How have they embodied the Moses ideal?
11. At the end of the book, Feiler asks his relative to define freedom. What does freedom mean to you?
12. If you have read Bruce Feiler's other books—*Where God Was Born*, *Abraham*, *Walking the Bible*—how does *America's Prophet* fit in with

those other works? Would you call it a continuation of the author's journey?

About the Author

Bruce Feiler is the *New York Times* bestselling author of seven books, including *Walking the Bible*, *Abraham*, and *Where God Was Born*, as well as the host of the documentary series *Walking the Bible* on PBS. An award-winning author, journalist, and speaker, Feiler is a graduate of Yale and Cambridge universities. He is a frequent contributor to NPR, CNN, and Fox News. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife and twin daughters.